AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-21 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 22–40 are added. The following is the status of the above-captioned application, as amended.

Claims 1–21 (Cancelled).

Claim 22 (New). A *Bacillus licheniformis* mutant host cell derived from a parent *B. licheniformis* host cell, which mutant host cell is mutated in one or more gene(s) encoding one or more polypeptide(s) involved in antibiotic synthesis which is at least 80% identical to one or more of the polypeptides shown in SEQ ID NOs: 2 to 22, wherein the mutant host cell expresses at least 5% less of the one or more polypeptide(s) involved in antibiotic synthesis than the parent host cell, when they are cultivated under comparable conditions.

Claim 23 (New). The host cell of claim 22, which is mutated by a partial or complete deletion of the one or more gene(s) encoding the one or more polypeptide(s) involved in antibiotic synthesis.

Claim 24 (New). The host cell of claim 22, in which two or more genes encoding two or more polypeptides involved in antibiotic synthesis are mutated.

Claim 25 (New). The host cell of claim 22, which comprises one or more heterologous gene(s) encoding one or more heterologous polypeptide(s).

Claim 26 (New). The host cell of claim 25, wherein the heterologous gene(s) are present in at least two copies.

Claim 27 (New). The host cell of claim 25, wherein the heterologous gene(s) are stably integrated into the genome of the cell.

Claim 28 (New). The host cell of claim 25, wherein the heterologous gene(s) are integrated into the genome of the cell without leaving any antibiotic resistance marker genes at the site of integration.

Claim 29 (New). The host cell of claim 25, wherein the heterologous gene(s) are transcribed from a heterologous promoter or from an artificial promoter.

Claim 30 (New). The host cell of claim 25, wherein the heterologous gene(s) are comprised in an operon.

Claim 31 (New). The host cell of claim 25, wherein the heterologous polypeptide(s) are antimicrobial peptides and/or a fusion peptide comprising a peptide which in its native form has antimicrobial activity.

Claim 32 (New). The host cell of claim 25, wherein the heterologous polypeptide(s) have biosynthetic activity and produce a compound or an intermediate of interest.

Claim 33 (New). The host cell of claim 32, wherein the compound or intermediate of interest comprises vitamins, amino acids, antibiotics, carbohydrates, or surfactants.

Claim 34 (New). The host cell of claim 33, wherein the carbohydrates comprise hyaluronic acid.

Claim 35 (New). The host cell of claim 25, wherein the heterologous polypeptide(s) are enzymes.

Claim 36 (New). The host cell of claim 35, wherein the enzymes are enzymes of a class selected from the group of enzyme classes consisting of oxidoreductases (EC 1), transferases (EC 2), hydrolases (EC 3), lyases (EC 4), isomerases (EC 5), and ligases (EC 6).

Claim 37 (New). The host cell of claim 36, wherein the enzymes are enzymes with an activity selected from the group of enzyme activities consisting of aminopeptidase, amylase, amyloglucosidase, carbohydrase, carboxypeptidase, catalase, cellulase, chitinase, cutinase, cyclodextrin glycosyltransferase, deoxyribonuclease, esterase, galactosidase, beta-galactosidase, glucoamylase, glucose oxidase, glucosidase, haloperoxidase, hemicellulase, invertase, isomerase, laccase, ligase, lipase, lyase, mannanase, mannosidase, oxidase, pectinase, peroxidase, phytase, phenoloxidase, polyphenoloxidase, protease, ribonuclease, transferase, transglutaminase, and xylanase.

Claim 38 (New). The host cell of claim 37, wherein the enzymes are amylases or mannanases.

Claim 39 (New). A process for producing a product of interest, comprising cultivating the *B. licheniformis* mutant host cell of claim 22 in a suitable medium to produce the product of interest.

Claim 40 (New). The process of claim 39, further comprising isolating or purifying the product of interest.